National Resources Inventory
2003 Annual NRI

Land Use

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2003 NRI Land Use

The National Resources Inventory (NRI) is a statistical survey of natural resource conditions and trends on non-Federal land in the United States — non-Federal land includes privately owned lands, tribal and trust lands, and lands controlled by state and local governments.

The NRI provides nationally consistent statistical data on how these lands are used and on changes in land use patterns for the period 1982 - 2003. To assess conservation issues on non-Federal rural lands, this land use information must be analyzed in conjunction with other NRI data elements. Land uses of particular interest are those involving the production of agricultural and timber products that are the foundation of our Nation's agricultural economy.

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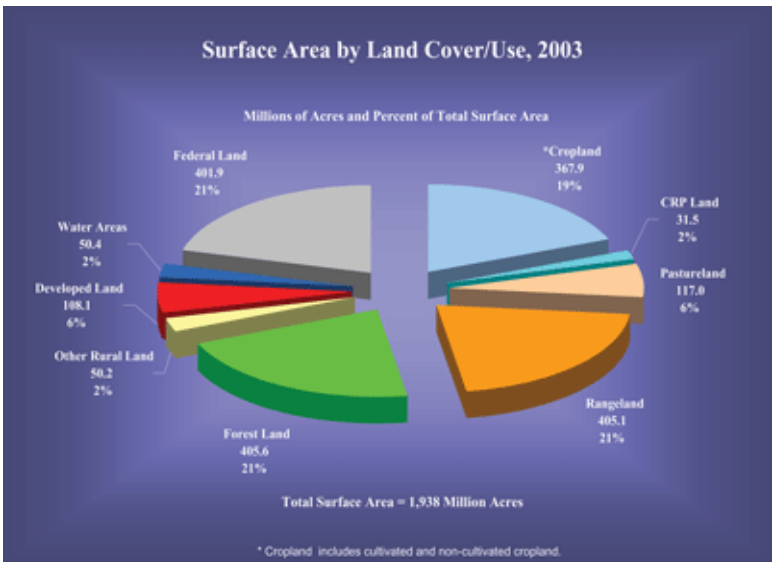
Key Findings

- The contiguous 48 states cover 1.9 billion acres; about 71% of this area is in non-Federal, rural land uses -- nearly 1.4 billion acres.
- Non-Federal rural lands are predominantly forest land (406 million acres), rangeland (405 million acres), and cropland (368 million acres).



Total Surface Area Table

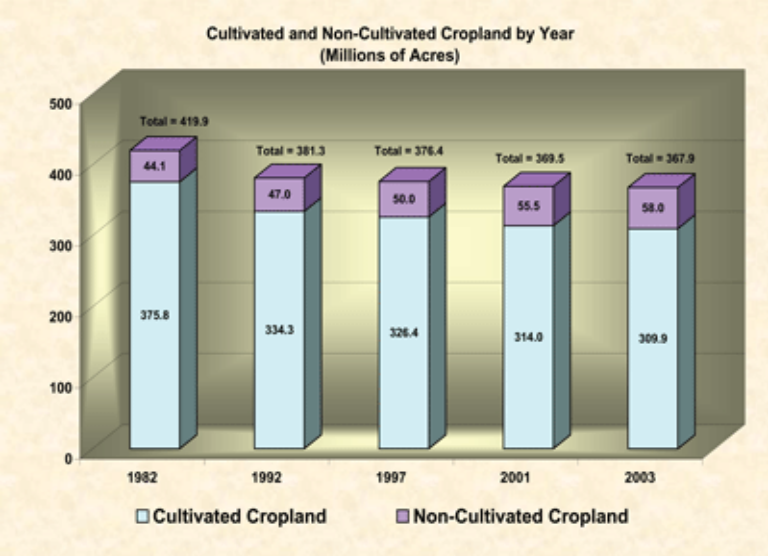
- The Nation's cropland acreage declined from 420 million acres in 1982 to 368 million acres in 2003, a decrease of about 12 percent. The net decline between 1997 and 2003 was 8 million acres, or about 2 percent.
- The percentage of total cropland that is non-cultivated has continued to increase since 1982. Non-cultivated cropland accounted for almost 16 percent (58 million acres) of

About the Data

Estimates presented here are based upon the latest information from the National Resources Inventory (NRI). The NRI is a longitudinal sample survey based upon scientific statistical principles and procedures. It is conducted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), in cooperation with Iowa State University's Center for Survey Statistics and Methodology.

These results are based upon the 2003 Annual NRI, which statistically updates 1997 NRI results with

cropland acreage in 2003, up from 11 percent (44 million acres) in 1982.



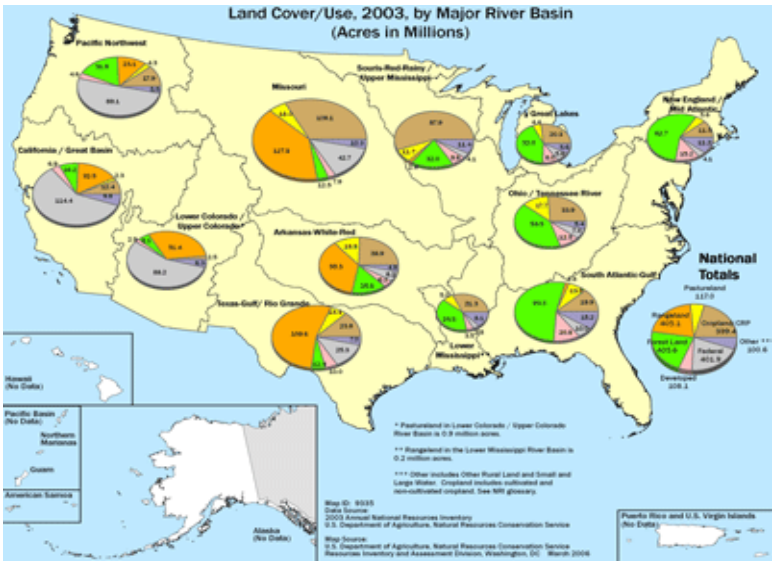
Cultivated and Non-Cultivated Cropland Tables

- Approximately 50% of the Nation's cropland is concentrated in just two of the 12 Major River Basins -- the Missouri and the Souris-Red-Rainy/Upper Mississippi. The Souris-Red-Rainy/Upper Mississippi Basin is over 50% cropland.
- Approximately 52% of the Nation's non-Federal forest land is concentrated in just three of the twelve Major River Basins -- the South Atlantic-Gulf, New England/Mid Atlantic, and the Ohio/Tennessee River. The South Atlantic-Gulf Basin is about 53% non-Federal forest land, and the New England/Mid Atlantic Basin is about 57% non-Federal forest land. Nearly 75% of the Nation's non-Federal forest land is located east of the Mississippi River.
- Approximately 72% of the Nation's non-Federal rangeland is concentrated in three of

data collected during 2000 - 2003. The NRI was conducted on a five-year cycle during the period 1982 to 1997, but is now conducted annually. NRI data were collected every five years for 800,000 sample sites; annual NRI data collection occurs at slightly less than 25 percent of these same sample sites.

NRI data release procedures are affected by implementation of an annual data collection approach, because the scale of NRI estimates is affected by these reduced sample sizes. Estimates are being released when they meet statistical standards and are

the twelve Major River Basins -- the Missouri, the Texas-Gulf/Rio Grande, and the Arkansas-White-Red. The Texas-Gulf/Rio Grande Basin is about 55% non-Federal rangeland. Approximately 99% of the Nation's non-Federal rangeland is located west of the Mississippi River.



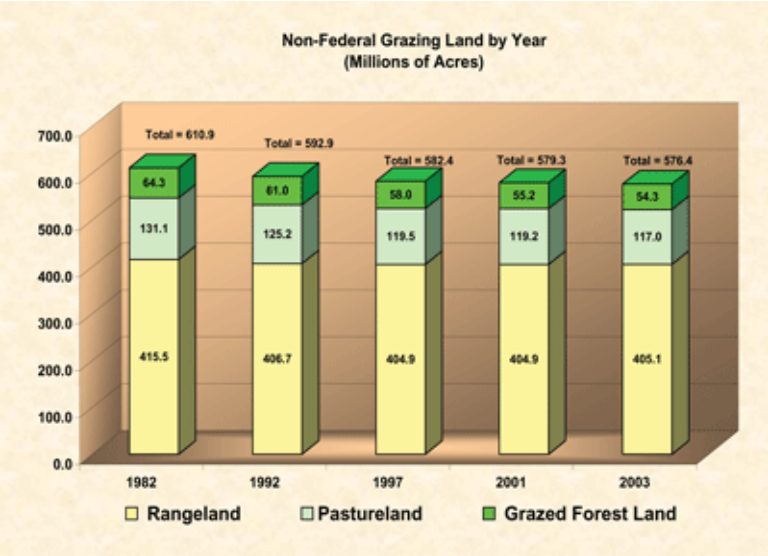
Land Cover/Use Table

- During the 2 decades between 1982 and 2003, non-Federal acreage devoted to grazing uses -- rangeland, pastureland, and grazed forest land -- declined from 611 million acres to 576 million acres, a decrease of over 5 percent. During the 6-year period between 1997 and 2003, the net decline in grazing land acreage was about 1 percent or a little over 1 million acres per year.

scientifically credible in accordance with NRCS policy, and in accordance with OMB and USDA Quality of Information Guidelines. The 2003 Annual NRI data are suitable for national and many regional and state level analyses.

Current estimates cover the contiguous 48 states. Future estimates will also cover Hawaii, Alaska, the Caribbean, and selected Pacific Basin islands.

The findings on land use come from the NRI data category "Land Cover/Use," which comprises mutually exclusive categories such as cropland, rangeland,



Grazing Land Table

Importance to the Nation

Land use is surprisingly dynamic, with annual shifts in and out of different uses. Examining net change in land use reveals general trends, but masks the real extent of land use change over time. In agriculture there are frequent shifts in the use of land among cropland, pastureland, rangeland, and forest land. Each time land changes use, it may affect erosion potential, contiguity of habitat, or hydrologic features of the landscape.

Cropland, pastureland, rangeland, and forest land comprise the majority of the Nation's land resources and thus:

- The condition of these lands directly or indirectly influences the environment enjoyed by the Nation.
- Meeting the Nation's objectives for natural

forest land, other rural land, developed land, and water areas. The NRI uses this classification to account for each and every acre of non-Federal land within the Nation. Every parcel of land is described by one and only one of these categories.

The NRI approach to conducting inventories facilitates examination of trends in land use over time because -

- the same sample sites have been studied since 1982
- the same data have been collected since 1982 [definitions and protocols have

resources and environmental quality will depend on how these lands are used and conserved.

Tabular Results

- **National and Major River Basin**
- **State**

More Information

For more information about the NRI, visit http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/NRI/

See the 2003 Annual NRI Glossary for definitions of key terms.

Send comments and questions to the NRI Help Desk

remained the same]

- the inventory accounts for 100 percent of the surface area
- quality assurance and statistical procedures are designed/ developed to ensure that trend data are scientifically legitimate and unambiguous
- it is easy to track lands as they go from one land-use category to another.

Irrespective of the scale of analysis, margins of error must be considered. Margins of error (at

the 95 percent confidence level) are presented for all NRI estimates.

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